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A NEW EDITION OF THE PLAYS OF AUGUSTUS THOMAS

LAST month appeared the following five of a new edition of the plays of Mr. Augustus Thomas published by Samuel French of New York and London: "The Witching Hour," "In Miz-zoura," "Mrs. Leffingwell's Boots," "Oliver Goldsmith," "The Earl of Pawtucket." Others are to follow.

Each one of these small volumes is enriched with a preface by Mr. Thomas himself showing why he wrote his plays, how he built them up and surmounted all sorts of difficulties. This is not only an illuminating feature of this new edition but is unique in the history of the drama for an artist to unveil the processes by which he arrived at his results.

Aside from the general interest this new edition of Mr. Thomas's plays must arouse, these prefaces will be extremely helpful to students of the art of play building.

A perusal of these prefaces now confirms the conviction which has been tentatively expressed by many from time to time, that Augustus Thomas is the greatest playwright this country has produced. And we have no hesitancy in saying that, according to our standard of art measurements, "The Witching Hour" is the greatest of all American dramas. While other playwrights have created some fine dramas—which we will take pleasure in noticing later—no American play has reached the high level of this drama.

As a subject it deals with one of the highest interests of the race—the absolute necessity of self-control, which Herbert Spencer says is "man's highest achievement"; then the noble way in which the subject is conceived; its splendid composition; its profound expression of the central idea; its exquisite love story and variety of emotional color; the firmness and largeness with which the char-

acters are drawn—and its faultless technique make this play America's masterpiece of dramatic art.

This may even now be a platitude. But what may be new to the public is—that no American dramatist has shown the extraordinary range of Mr. Thomas. In this he differs from and unquestionably leads other playwrights of America.

In addition to several dramatizations of novels such as "Chimmie Fadden," "Soldiers of Fortune," etc., note the great stirring Western melodrama "Arizona"; then the fine character play "In Miz-zoura"; the pathetic and pastoral drama "Alabama," in which he did so much to assuage the lingering ill feeling between the North and the South and which helped greatly to bring the sections together, a truly national, social service of incalculable value, which alone should endear him to the nation. Note the delicious laughter-compelling comedies like "The Other Girl" and "The Earl of Pawtucket"; the screaming farcical comedies of the "Mrs. Leffingwell's Boots" and "On the Quiet" type. Then consider the semi-historical comedy of manners "Oliver Goldsmith"; and finally the exalting psychological and sociological plays like "As a Man Thinks" and, greatest of all, we repeat "The Witching Hour."

This is a record unattained by any other American dramatist and the National Institute of Arts and Letters, of which Mr. Thomas is a member, did him simple justice when, two years ago, it chose him as the first recipient of the Academy Medal for the Drama.

Wishing to have an expression of opinion of Mr. Thomas's methods from perhaps the highest authority on the theatre in the United States, Mr. Brander Matthews, we requested of him a short review of this new edition and he kindly sent us the critique we publish on another page.

"EVENING" AND "GLORIA VICTIS"

SCULPTURES BY F. WELLINGTON RUCKSTUHL

(See frontispiece and opposite page)

THIS month's frontispiece engraving by Mr. Cole—the last one to appear in the first year of THE ART WORLD—is after the statue "Evening" by F. Wellington Ruckstuhl. We print also a half-tone of another of his works: "Gloria Victis." They speak for themselves.

Mr. Ruckstuhl belongs to that school of artists who deplore extremes—both in idealism and realism, claiming that extremes in either direction are unhealthy, and that all enduring art must be sufficiently real to satisfy our hunger for truth, and ideal enough to lift us above the commonplace and ugly. His marble "Evening," a statue larger than life, exemplifies this point of view.

Asked for his intention in making this statue he said: "Everything in nature folds at evening, flowers, birds and trees, even the grass as well as animals and mankind. This folding has been sug-

gested by the movements and lines of this statue, in the face of which we see suggested the approach of sleep. Aside from that, it is a study in beautiful lines and forms, and finally, it is an attempt to prove that a statue can be completely nude yet profoundly chaste in spirit."

We learn that the plaster model of this, his first statue, was exhibited in the Paris Salon in 1888 where it received an Honorable Mention. It was exhibited in the marble by the Society of American Artists at New York in 1893, and thence was sent to the Chicago World's Fair where it received one of the eleven Grand Medals there given. Later it went to the Metropolitan Museum where it remained for sixteen years.

As for the "Gloria Victis" it was first known as "The Spirit of the Confederacy" but later the title was changed. It is a bronze group fourteen feet